



WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS

State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development
Office of Economic Advisors

FOR WEST CENTRAL WISCONSIN COUNTIES

BARRON, CHIPPEWA, CLARK, DUNN, EAU CLAIRE, PEPIN, PIERCE, POLK, ST. CROIX

April
2005

Unemployment Rates Melt in March

Unemployment rates in the West Central region and the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area melted with the winter's snow in March. The unemployment rate for West Central Wisconsin declined from 6.7 percent in February to 6.3 percent in March. In the Eau Claire-Chippewa metropolitan area the unemployment rate dropped from 6.1 percent to 5.7 percent in March 2005, not seasonally

adjusted. Both the regional and metro rates were higher than the State of Wisconsin unemployment rate in March of 5.5 percent and the national rate of 5.4 percent, also not seasonally adjusted.

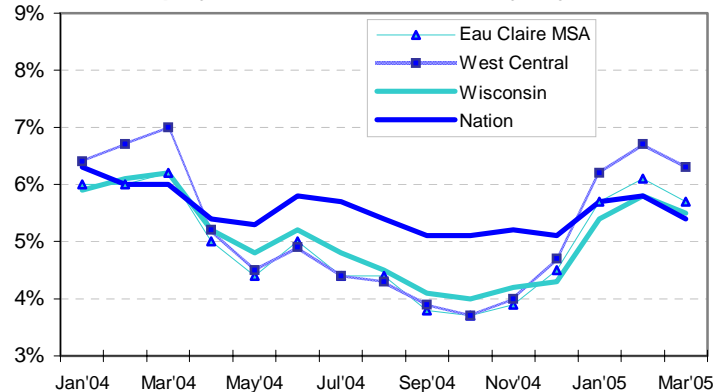
Unemployment rates dropped in March in eight of the nine counties in the West Central region. In Pierce County the rate increased from 5.5 percent in February to 5.7 percent in March. The greatest reduction in the state occurred

in Barron County where the unemployment rate dropped from 8.5 percent in February to 7.3 percent in March.

All of the nine counties showed rates lower than one year ago and the regional rate was down seven-tenths of a percentage point from 7.0 percent in March 2004. St. Croix County showed the greatest reduction in the region declining 1.2 percentage points from one year ago to 6.2 percent unemployed in March 2005.

The drop in unemployment rates is a double-edged sword. Yes, rates are down because the number of residents unemployed declined by 1,950 from one year ago. But, the number of residents with jobs also declined from twelve months earlier. In March 2005 in a total labor force of 240,700 in West Central Wisconsin, 225,430 participants were employed. That is 3,570 fewer employed residents than one year ago and follows a trend that began in January. The labor force estimates for the first three months of 2005 when com-

Unemployment Rates-Not seasonally adjusted



	Jan'04	Feb'04	Mar'04	Jan'05	Feb'05	Mar'05
Eau Claire MSA	6.0%	6.0%	6.2%	5.7%	6.1%	5.7%
West Central	6.4%	6.7%	7.0%	6.2%	6.7%	6.3%
Wisconsin	5.9%	6.1%	6.2%	5.4%	5.8%	5.5%
Nation	6.3%	6.0%	6.0%	5.7%	5.8%	5.4%

Civilian Labor Force Estimates* for West Central Wisconsin counties: March 2005

	Barron			Chippewa			Clark			Dunn			Eau Claire Co.		
	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04
Labor force	24,384	24,713	25,160	31,257	31,609	31,820	16,900	16,916	17,441	22,419	22,727	23,901	53,643	54,052	37,127
Employed	22,601	22,620	23,121	28,949	29,094	29,350	15,537	15,487	15,985	21,050	21,235	22,305	51,100	51,355	35,011
Unemployed	1,783	2,093	2,039	2,308	2,515	2,470	1,363	1,429	1,456	1,369	1,492	1,596	2,543	2,697	2,116
% unemployed	7.3	8.5	8.1	7.4	8.0	7.8	8.1	8.4	8.3	6.1	6.6	6.7	4.7	5.0	5.7
	Pepin			Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			West Central region		
	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04
Labor force	3,747	3,757	3,887	23,243	23,325	23,242	22,745	22,901	23,382	42,367	42,678	42,713	240,705	242,678	228,673
Employed	3,471	3,450	3,588	21,928	22,040	21,841	21,065	21,102	21,434	39,728	39,931	39,569	225,429	226,314	212,204
Unemployed	276	307	299	1,315	1,285	1,401	1,680	1,799	1,948	2,639	2,747	3,144	15,276	16,364	16,469
% unemployed	7.4	8.2	7.7	5.7	5.5	6.0	7.4	7.9	8.3	6.2	6.4	7.4	6.3	6.7	7.2

* not seasonally adjusted

Industry Employment Estimates for West Central Wisconsin: March 2005

(Employment in thousands)	Barron			Clark			Dunn			Pepin		
	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04
Total Nonfarm	21.1	21.0	21.1	10.0	9.9	9.8	15.3	15.4	16.2	2.1	2.0	2.1
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
Manufacturing	5.6	5.5	5.7	2.7	2.7	2.8	2.3	2.3	2.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Trade	3.6	3.5	3.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	2.5	2.5	2.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Transportation & Utilities	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.1	0.1	0.1
Financial Activities	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1
Education & Health Services	2.6	2.6	2.6	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.7	1.7	1.6	0.3	0.3	0.3
Leisure & Hospitality	1.6	1.6	1.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	1.3	1.3	1.3	0.2	0.1	0.2
Info/Prof. & Bus.Serv./Other	1.6	1.6	1.5	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.4	1.3	1.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Total Government	4.5	4.5	4.5	2.1	2.1	2.1	3.5	3.5	4.6	0.5	0.5	0.5
	Pierce			Polk			St. Croix			Eau Claire MSA		
	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04	Mar '05	Feb '05	Mar '04
Total Nonfarm	10.6	10.5	10.3	14.7	14.6	14.8	26.8	26.7	26.6	76.7	76.8	76.8
Const/Min'g/Nat. Resources	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	1.6	1.5	1.5	2.9	2.8	2.5
Manufacturing	0.8	0.8	0.8	3.6	3.5	3.7	5.4	5.4	5.5	10.4	10.3	10.3
Trade	0.9	0.9	1.1	2.1	2.0	2.0	4.4	4.4	4.3	12.6	12.7	13.0
Transportation & Utilities	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.3	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.8	2.8	2.8
Financial Activities	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.5	1.3	1.3	1.2	3.6	3.7	3.8
Education & Health Services	1.2	1.2	1.2	2.0	2.0	1.9	2.9	2.9	2.9	13.0	12.9	12.5
Leisure & Hospitality	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.2	1.2	1.4	3.0	2.9	2.9	6.7	6.7	7.2
Information/Prof. & Bus.Serv.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.9	1.9	1.7	3.6	3.6	3.5	8.6	8.5	8.2
Other Services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	3.7	3.7	3.8
Total Government	4.1	4.1	3.8	2.5	2.5	2.7	3.5	3.6	3.7	12.4	12.7	12.7

Current month preliminary. Estimates based on March 2004 benchmark. Summing from unrounded numbers.

pared with the same month one year ago have shown large reductions in the number of employed in the region as well as smaller estimates for the number of unemployed. It is still unclear if the estimates are pointing to a new trend in the labor market or are merely reflecting a new methodology in labor force estimates that began in January.

Half of the loss of jobholders in the region occurred in Dunn County and is related to fewer workers reported in state government. Total employment in the county declined from 22,300 in March 2004 to 21,050 in March 2005 at the same time that state government jobs dropped from 2,560 to 1,520. The number of jobs with state government first declined in July of 2004 and continued at the level through the end of the year and into 2005. There was no increase in the county

unemployment, however, and the current rate of 6.1 percent is actually lower than the 6.7 percent unemployed recorded twelve months earlier.

In other regional counties there were no significant changes in state government jobs but half of the region's counties are showing a reduction in the number of total employed over the twelve-month period. Those over-the-year losses are reflected in lower job counts for the region in manufacturing, trade, transportation and utilities, leisure and hospitality, and government.

Compared with February some industry sectors in the region again showed signs of an improving economy. Construction employers added 220 jobs in March and manufacturing jobs increased by 150. Most of the additional manufacturing jobs were in the Eau Claire metro area where March marked the third month where

the number of manufacturing jobs was higher than twelve months earlier. Barron, Polk and St. Croix counties together added roughly 50 manufacturing jobs in March.

Possibly related to an increase in production activity is the addition of 230 jobs in the information, professional and business services group of industries. Included in this group are firms that supply workers to other employers, especially manufacturers. This industry group has been steadily adding jobs in the last four years.

Employers in leisure and hospitality industries in West Central Wisconsin added 160 jobs in March and all of the new jobs were in the rural counties of the region.

Overall, regional employers added 430 jobs in March pushing the count of total jobs with employers located in the nine-county region to 177,300, above the count in February of 176,900 jobs.



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